

Grant Henry Allen

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DR. GRANT'S ADDRESS

TO

THE CANDIDATES

FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR IN MEDICINE,

IN THE

MEDICAL INSTITUTION OF YALE COLLEGE,

JANUARY 16, 1850.

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ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE CANDIDATES  
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BY  
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Late Member of the Board of Examiners.

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## ADDRESS.

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From the point which we now occupy, gentlemen, the most inattentive observer, the least philosophical mind, the veriest tyro in science, in recalling the scientific history of the past, does so with a feeling of conscious self-satisfaction. And this arises from the fact, that instead of comparing himself with his contemporaries, he chooses those who in the dark and unenlightened ages of the past, have received the praise and eulogiums of the times in which they lived for wisdom and knowledge, capable of unraveling nature's hidden mysteries. But he who looks attentively at the past and present, is impressed with no one fact, which leaves such an indelible impression on the mind, as the tardy advance of science, up to the middle of the last century.

Does he inquire the reason? He has only to recall two or three centuries, and the days of superstition and bigotry, the dark twin sisters of ignorance, are present to his mind. He feels that science could hold no communion with such minds. Neither could her pure and elevated light illumine the world, 'till its habitants had passed from beneath its superstitious bondage.

To arrive at any definite, or at all satisfactory knowledge, of the advance which the human intellect has achieved, in the stupendous fabric that we now denominate science, it will be necessary, in consequence of the brief space allotted to a single address, to select from numerous subjects a single example, and trace it from its origin to its present state of development.

From the numerous sciences which crowd before our minds, whether it be the legal, as we beheld it from the time that

our first parents were expelled from Paradise,—when being but a single family, whose wants cares and interest being identical, the very simplest forms sufficed for the adjustment of all claims and difficulties arising in the infancy of our race. As the community spread itself, and its members increased, the laws necessary for its weal became more voluminous and rigid, till it has acquired the subtilty and intricacies it presents to us at this day, which can only be unraveled by deep and attentive application to the contents of the misty volumes that compose the libraries of our erudite jurists.

Theology unveils to us a labyrinth no less complicated, in the almost countless diversities we find in the voluminous manuscripts of the fathers of the church, and our own ablest divines. While the political economist exhibits to us those clear and lucid expositions of natural rights, by which the weaker and less powerful governments are placed on a footing of equality with the stronger, securing to them the full enjoyment of all their liberties; which, by a less enlightened polity, would make the weaker ever a prey to the stronger. While each of these sciencies would, to follow their rise and progress, and enquire into the minutiae of their development, be themes of much interest and instruction; we are compelled for the present to pass them by, and take up one, which though less instructive and amusing, is still more or less appreciated by all, in times when our ailments imperiously demand its sanative powers.

The science of medicine, like that of theology, is one in which all are more or less versed in its details at the present time; and the less of real knowledge possessed, the greater is the readiness and ability to solve its mysteries. As in theology none are so ignorant, but that they understand something in its fundamental truths, though they may not be able to apply that knowledge to any doctrinal purpose; so in medicine, the most ignorant can now prescribe a simple remedial agent, without knowing the why or the wherefore of its action. This elementary knowledge of medicine, by the progress of science and edu-

cation, is now possessed by every member of the community. Yet it is only through the toil and study of past ages, that every one now knows, what the most distinguished members of the healing art were for centuries entirely ignorant of.

It is only for the last few centuries, that medicine has deserved the name, or was at all entitled to the denomination of a science—only a few previous, that it could lay claim to the appellation of a healing art—but it was what it was styled, a handicraft.

Medicine in its earliest days was composed of incantations, philters, potions, &c. which accompanied by certain enigmatical signs of the prescriber, performed upon its credulous and ignorant recipients the most astounding and remarkable cures, many of which have been handed down to posterity with implicit confidence and religious veneration.

To trace the rise, and follow regularly though very succinctly our science, we shall but glimpse at its earliest recorded dawn. Egypt then must be regarded as its cradle; though Assyria has been claimed as its birth place by many of the ablest writers on the subject.

As the human body from the commencement of time has been subject to ailments and injuries, it would follow as a necessary consequence that among the first and most pressing wants of our race would be means to alleviate our ills. Though the remedies in the commencement would be of the simplest kinds, still instinct would guide in selecting some of the more obvious. Thus by imperceptible additions, in the course of time, many such were added to the list. As early as the writings of Moses, mention is made of the cure of disease, (Leprosy,) and as among the Jews, it was confined to the Priests, so among the Egyptians, it was confided to the same hands, as was all other learning and acquirements, which were kept for their own advancement, and held to retain their power and influence over the minds of the community.

Of this early date all the information which can be found on the subject leads us to infer that the treatment of disease

consisted in external purifications, and certain superstitious ceremonies, which could have no other effect in curing disease than such as they exerted through the influence of the imagination.

That the practice of medicine was confined exclusively to the religious orders, is evident from the fact, that it is not until the introduction of medicine into Greece, that we find the name of an individual recorded who practiced the art of medicine.

Chiron is represented as the first, and his name has been handed down to our times, not so much from his own extensive acquirements, as from those which were possessed by his illustrious pupil, which have ever reflected on his preceptor. Your minds doubtless revert at once to the distant times of *Æsculapius*, (B. C. 1300,) who was doubtless the first who made medicine a distinct study and pursuit. So many and varied were the improvements he added to the art, that after his death he was regarded as one of their deities. Temples were reared to his memory in many places throughout Greece, where he was styled the God of Physic. Tradition declares that his death was caused by the jealousy of *Pluto*, in consequence of his rescuing so many from the grave—certainly a high tribute to his professional success and skill. The acquirements and knowledge of the father were with great care committed to his sons and family, and they became the priests of the temples which were dedicated to him. Thus medicine, after having for a few years thrown off the priesthood and stood upon its own merits, returned again to their temples, under the immediate care of the descendants of *Æsculapius*, who were styled the *Asclepiadæ*.

These temples were both temples and hospitals, and as their locations were selected for their salubriousness, we may safely conclude that the cures may be attributed to that cause, rather than to the remedial agents employed, as they were all mere external applications.

The three temples that became the most renowned in Greece,

were Gnidos, Cos and Rhodes—where in course of time, tablets were erected by the patients, as votive offerings to the god, recording their wonderful cures, and the mode of treatment which had been adopted to secure the happy result. As these memoranda increased in number, the priests increased their knowledge, and refreshed their memories from these records, which were ever before them. In this way, they acquired increased knowledge of disease. The aspirants after medical knowledge, eagerly flocked to the temples, to study these records. And thus naturally and unavoidably arose the first schools of medicine.

The schools of Cos and Gnidos early became rival and antagonistic—Cos assuming the position of philosophizing, and subjecting experience to the rigid rules of reasoning; while Gnidos, on the contrary, applied herself to the careful observation, and the minute details of the different phases of disease, as they presented themselves at the bedside. At this early date, in the antagonistic position assumed by these two rival schools, may be seen the first dawn or embryo of those two sects, Dogmatists and Empirics, which for so many centuries divided the medical world.

It was not till a long period after, that these two sects were formed, and their principles of practice established. It was not until the time of Hippocrates, (B. C. 400,) that the former of these sects may be considered as firmly established, and their principles openly avowed; while those of the Empirics were still later in the period of time. Hippocrates may be considered as the founder of the Dogmatic school. As to the origin of the Empirics, there is some doubt to whom to attribute it. Pliny ascribes it to Acron, a Sicilian, but Celsus declares Serapion, of Alexandria, the founder. In the person of Hippocrates we are particularly interested, and our attention is arrested by him as one of those rare examples, who so completely outstrip all their contemporaries, as to stand alone, and be a landmark in the history of science—to form an era, from which medicine may look back and feel that it was dur-

ing his time she passed from the chrysalis state of a handicraft, to be ranked among the enduring and imperishable sciences. The writings of Hippocrates have been doubtless much over estimated as to their number. But upon some few works, the deep thought, careful observation, minute record of particular cases—an excess, almost prodigality of ideas and paucity of words—a style which belonged to none of his contemporaries, and few of his successors, even of the present time, leave no doubt of the authenticity of the originals.

With respect to his philosophical opinions, he was a Pythagorean. His principal pathological doctrine was that the fluids are the primary seat of all morbid action or disease. This doctrine under the title of the humoral pathology, became the prevailing doctrine of all the different theorists for over two thousand years.

The Ptolemies, about B. C. 300, founded the Alexandrian library and school of philosophy and medicine. In this school Erasistratus and Herophilus dissected the human body, and are recorded as the first who did so. In this school too was the first systematic division of labor, or different individuals teaching different branches. About this time we find the two sects alluded to above, arraying themselves in opposition, the one to the other, the great question at issue being how far theory should influence practice.

Though these sects were seemingly so far separated, still in fact, they assimilated on important points, which in the heat of discussion, they entirely overlooked—it was that the Dogmatist built his theory upon facts, and the Empiric combined his theory by the aid of facts.

After the introduction of medicine into Rome, there arose the sect of the Methodics, who regarded the solids as the primary seat of disease. Themison of Laodicea may be considered the founder of this sect (Solidist,) and is directly opposed to Hippocrates, who regarded the fluids as primarily affected in disease. The humoral pathology of Hippocrates was ably defended by Galen, and universally adopted by his successors

until the commencement of the seventeenth century, when the doctrine of solidism was again revived, and has been steadily gaining ground up to our own day. The first and most distinguished Roman physician was Celsus, and from his writings, we see that medicine and surgery had already advanced considerably, for he speaks of many of the capital operations. Many names of just celebrity appear now, in the succession of time, in the annals of medicine. But the limits of a single address preclude the mention of them. We pass to the times of Galen, a name we all revere equally with that of Hippocrates himself. His talents, erudition, rank and success entitle him to our highest regard. His accurate description of disease, and his voluminous works, amounting to two hundred distinct treatises, place him as an example worthy of our admiration and imitation. With Galen, the Greek and Roman schools rose to their zenith. Soon after this time, the Roman Empire began to exhibit the symptoms of decay, and with it the science of medicine rapidly declined. At the commencement of the seventh century, we may date the complete termination of these schools; the conquest of Mahomet, and the total destruction of literature and science consequent upon it—the ruthless burning of the vast and splendid library of Alexandria, founded and enriched by the munificence of the Ptolomies, all tended to arrest the progress of our profession. But in process of time medicine again began to be cultivated, and among the Arabic physicians, we find names of deserved distinction. We may cite Rhazes, Avicenna, Albucasis, Avizora and Avenoes, and with the latter of these may be said to have terminated the Arabic or Saracenic School, (ninth century.) It was during the continuance of this school that chemistry may be said to have originated as a distinct science. To this school are we also indebted for the first description of some of our present diseases, small pox, measles, &c.

After the decline of the Saracenic school, we have the rise of the Neopolitan, (Monte Cassino and Salerno,) whose reputation and influence were due much to their location, being on the

great route of the Crusades from Europe into Asia. This school retained its celebrity until the thirteenth century, when it was eclipsed by the universities of Bologna and Paris. The school of Salerno, however, deserves favorable mention from being the first school of medicine where Diplomas were awarded to candidates, who had passed a certain time under instruction, and passed an examination. About this period (thirteenth century,) the practice was introduced of dissecting the human subject, which has been of such inestimable value to the profession. The credit of the first public dissection is due to Mondini, a professor of Bologna, (A. D. 1315.) It was during this period, that the Alchemists had almost universal sway; but the delusive hope of the Philosopher's stone, which was to transmute the baser metals into the precious gold, was not to be realized, until our own times, and on our far western shores.

The spirit of adventure which the Crusades had induced—the influence and knowledge acquired by travel in other countries—the capture of Constantinople by Mahomet 2nd, and the return of the Monks, who had formerly fled to that city, and had carried with them their literary manuscripts in their exile from Italy, and now returning with them—all tended to give a spirit of research and a desire for learning. Just at this time was discovered the art of printing, when the human mind long enslaved by ignorance and superstition thirsted for knowledge. And now instead of the few manuscripts, accessible only to the privileged, and obtained only at great expense of labor or money, the stream at once broadened and deepened till literature, philosophy and medicine rolled with unbroken wave after wave over the whole of Europe.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were prolific in advancing, supporting and adopting numberless theories and hypotheses. About the middle of the seventeenth century, 1658, is particularly interesting to every member of our profession, as it records the death of the illustrious Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood. The revolutions this discovery made in the practice of medicine and theory of disease, are too ob-

vious to need comment. During the eighteenth century, medicine and its various collateral branches were placed on what may be considered so firm a basis, that we are not surprised at the rapid advance it continued to make, up to our own times. The names which still adorn the annals of the profession are so numerous, and the records of their practice so fully detailed, that we can not even mention the distinguished names, glance at their theoretical views, or stop to notice the peculiarities, or merits of their respective modes of practice.

It is from the commencement of the present century, that the records of our science present a galaxy of illustrious names. The system of specialities, or of certain individuals applying all the energies of their minds to the investigation of a particular disease, or class of diseases, has tended more than any other one cause to the rapid advancement we see in our profession. This system from being applicable to individuals only, has now assumed so broad and extended a character, that its bounds are only marked by the lines which divide the great empires of the globe.

France we see taking the lead of all other nations in its Pharmaceutical Chemistry and its Pathology, and a host of indefatigable laborers, have been and are constantly adding to our fund of chemical and pathological knowledge.

If France stands pre-eminent for her Pathology, Germany claims an equal share of honor and distinction, for the genius and reputation of her Anatomists and Physiologists. While France and Germany have been illuminating us on the important branches just named, Great Britain and America have not been backward in storing up the knowledge acquired in all these departments of medicine; and have made such practical application of this knowledge, in the treatment of disease, that we may safely affirm, without the charge of egotism being brought home to our doors, that both these nations may learn from us much in the practical management of these very diseases, which they have so ably elucidated.

Having now traced in a brief and imperfect manner, imper-

fect from the very necessity of its brevity, some of the most important points in the history of our profession, it now remains, in concluding this sketch, to advert to some of the many circumstances under which you will be called to exercise your professional skill.

The profession you have chosen, young gentlemen, is fraught with the deepest responsibilities, and consequently care and anxiety. It is a profession which has ever been characterized by the exhibition of those pure and benevolent principles, which are so essential to constitute the christian and philanthropist. All classes of society will alike require your assiduity and care. The scenes of your labors will be as varied and opposite as the abodes of luxury and wealth, or wretched and squalid poverty can produce. The rapidity of these changes and associations can only be appreciated, as they are daily and hourly presented in their sad reality. Visit the chamber of the still beautiful, but emaciated and wasting consumptive, whose bright eye and brilliant hectic warns and impresses all but herself with this sad truth, that few, very few of the sands of life remain unnumbered—surrounded though she be with friends who eagerly watch and anticipate her every wish—wealth, too, may have been lavished with wasteful prodigality to adorn, to beautify and enrich her highly cultivated mind with all those rare and beautiful accomplishments, which in themselves are priceless—add to these, in the case before us, grace and beauty of person, with sweet resignation and patience under the endurance of suffering,—and the picture is irresistible.

Deep soul-stirring interest is awakened—all the energies of the mind are roused to grasp the secret causes which are undermining this frail fabric, and to arrest the fearful malady which has poisoned the fountain of her life blood, and alas, now slowly, though inevitably, must sever the chords that bind her spirit to its clay.

But change the picture. In yonder wretched hovel, that deserves not the name of home, lies another frail daughter of

humanity. Her haggard wasted frame, her squalid locks and ragged covering, her fevered limbs and throbbing head, as it presses no other pillow than its pile of straw, is devoid of every circumstance to awaken the deeper sympathies of the soul ; yet this one alike as the other requires your sympathy, your counsel and your watchful care. With the former of the two, it required no exertion, no schooling of the mind, no appeals to the conscience, to stir up the sensibilities of the heart, and awaken the deepest interest, the most intense anxiety for her recovery. With what solicitude is each prescription prepared, and how carefully are its effects marked and noted. Is it so with the second ? Should it not be, and if not, why ? Are they not both daughters of one common humanity ? Belong they not alike to the same great sisterhood ? Both a prey to the like disease, the same wasting fever and quenchless thirst, do they not alike require our care and sympathy ? The one is solaced by the assiduous care of ever watchful friends—the other desolate, forsaken. Why then are we too frequently disposed to bestow so much care and attention on the former, and withhold so much from the latter, whose condition imperiously demands the more. I leave the question, young gentlemen, for each one to answer hereafter to himself, and to him who reads the heart.

Be not deceived : such partial feelings and sordid motives are not such as will enable you to fulfil the great mission of benevolence to which you have devoted your time, talents and lives.

The cry of suffering humanity, be it in the most humble sphere—let it proceed from the most degraded haunts, where dwell the victims of crime and vice—though nature shudders at the thought of contact, and sensibility recoils from these loathsome abodes—be assured in places like these, the self sacrificing physician reaps the richest harvest of happiness, and soul-felt satisfaction—conscious that he is performing his duty to those whom God has impressed with his own image, and has enjoined, ay commanded, us to love as ourselves. In

the consciousness of this integrity of purpose, I say you will find one great source of pleasure and joy amid the trials that await you in your professional career. He who launches his adventurous bark on the current of life, must do it fully determined to breast manfully every storm, and by indomitable perseverance to vanquish every obstacle. If any of you have embarked in our profession with some bright ærial vision of brilliant reputation and unparalled success without much effort, relying on some happy hit to introduce you into practice—or as the poet has rendered it, “there is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to greatness”—let me assure you, gentlemen, it takes no wand of the enchantress to conjure up the future—to see hopes and expectations, built on no more solid foundation than mere chance, crumble, and that too long before its deluded votary has lived out half his days.

But while I would impress upon you to dismiss at once these visionary hopes, as things which can never be realized, I would not, as the bright visions of usefulness begin to dawn upon your professional horizon, extinguish them or even discourage you. On the contrary, entering upon, as you now are about to do, the arduous, trying, and many, many times, thankless tasks that will be imposed upon you, I would have you fully prepared for, and expecting them. That they will come, be satisfied, from the joint testimony of all who have preceded me on former occasions like the present—those to whom have been assigned the pleasing office of addressing each graduating class from year to year—who have been chosen from the ranks of our profession, and who have labored a longer or shorter time—all, without a dissenting voice, accord difficulties of no ordinary nature to the successful aspirant for professional distinction. Therefore, gentlemen, you may safely conclude, that they will be met, and must be overcome. You have now passed the term of your preparatory medical pupillage. These halls of science have been opened for your instruction. The courses of lectures here are delivered in all their fullness and minutiae. The opportunities of investigating

disease are abundant in the hospital attached to this institution. For minute anatomical study the advantages which this school offers are surpassed by none ; and as a guarantee for the thorough practical knowledge of analytical chemistry which is here offered, I need only say, that your professor has been Yale's proud boast for more than a quarter of a century. Upon the manner then, in which you have improved these opportunities will depend much of your success in your future course. Unless the fundamental principles of your profession have been thoroughly examined and perfectly acquired, the need of such knowledge will meet you at the very threshold of your professional career.

Progress is the order of the age ; and though you may have so attended these preliminary studies, as to have passed your examination with credit to yourselves, and entire satisfaction to the board of examiners, this is not all. The reputation of this University rests upon its graduates. She has a right to expect, and even to demand, that you sustain the high and well deserved reputation she has acquired. Your patrons will imperiously insist that their medical attendant shall keep up with all the varied improvements and additions which are continually being made by the thousand illustrious and laborious collaborators in our science. This can only be done by patient study and analysis. The works of our best authors are to be your constant companions. A minute acquaintance with their views of practice and management of disease—whether on the other shores of the Atlantic, or throughout the whole extent of our own country—should be as familiar to you as those of your immediate teachers in this your Alma Mater. I am well aware that you can not wade through all the trash that is written in these book-making days—neither would I wish it ; but in addition to one or more standard authors on each subject, I would advise a liberal subscription to some of the leading medical reviews of the day. These by their cheapness are accessible to all, and therefore none are excusable for not being in possession of them. Having done

this, you have done all in your power to perfect yourselves in the various branches of your profession. Should you at the onset, which it is not unlikely you will, meet with some of those perplexing cases, which put to the test the oldest and most experienced of us; should all your remedies fail to procure any alleviation of disease; should the patient, to add to the aggravation of the case, be an individual in the community to whom all eyes are turned, all anxious alike for his ultimate recovery; should the disease baffle you at every point, till at last you see him struggling with the king of terrors—it is under circumstances like these that the consciousness of a thorough knowledge of your profession alone, and a full, sincere conviction that every remedy has been tried, every means adopted, and every resource which our science offers has been timely brought into requisition, can afford you comfort or solace. But if to this the busy tongue of scandal whispers that the cause of death lies in a want of knowledge on the part of the medical attendant; or if envy has secretly lisped in the most strict confidence to some old nurse that some other remedies might have been, and probably would have been, more successful—the case is certainly not improved. That which was committed as a profound secret, was of course intended to be “proclaimed on the house-top.” Be assured it will not fail to greet your ear through some pseudo friend, much more frequently than will be at all necessary to recall it to the least retentive memory.

If not more fortunate than the rest of your professional brethren, these things, more or less aggravated, will assuredly happen to most of you. But the antidote to the venomous tongue of scandal, or the blistering lips of envy, is before you. Be advised, then, gentlemen, and appropriate it to yourselves in abundance and to spare—if not for your own wants, to cover or conceal the defects of your less favored brethren. The antidote, I need scarcely add, is the acquisition of a thorough practical knowledge of all that concerns our profession.

One more topic, gentlemen, and I shall conclude. It is one which certainly would seem to need no caution—that the blush of shame should crimson the cheek of him who would insinuate even the possibility of any, whom I now address, needing such warning. I refer to Truthfulness—a free, frank, absolute and entire truthfulness in the narration of cases fallen under our own management, without the slightest tinging of exaggeration. It is a fault many fall into through excessive vanity, or a desire to appear more than our consciences tell us we deserve. Under this same head may be classed what is ordinarily termed expediency, which, stripping it of its equivocal drapery, is nothing more or less than direct falsehood. If it is wrong or sinful to tell a lie under any circumstances, it is plainly so under all and every exigence.

This doctrine of expediency has found many advocates, and that too among those who have justly been regarded as standards of truth and morality. Thus, Dr. Paley openly declares a man may lie to save his own life, or to a robber to conceal his property. Take another case, which not unlikely may happen to many of you. A parent is dangerously ill. In the opinion of his medical attendant his life depends upon perfect quiet, and preclusion of all and every cause of excitement. Now in another room is a favorite child also sick, very sick, and dies. The father inquires anxiously after the condition of his child. Shall he be informed of his child's death, or shall he be told his child is doing well—that he lives? Paley and the other advocates of the doctrine of expediency tell us that it is justifiable under such circumstances to lie.

Gentlemen, if it is right and righteous to violate any positive unconditional command of the great Author of truth, then and then only can wrong be right, can evil be good, can a lie be justifiable. I insist then that under no circumstances can a physician be justified in wilfully deceiving, by a positive declaration, his patients or their friends. Do not understand me that I would have you alarmists. Far from that; the duty and privilege of a physician is to inspire hope, and cheer his

patient, both by words and actions. Where hope exists it will always be your pleasure to paint it in its brightest colors, and present it in its most cheerful and desirable aspect. But where from the nature of the case death is inevitable, even though distant, fail not to give timely warning of its fearful nearness.

Not unfrequently will you be made to witness every effort unavailing, every resource of science ineffectual, the most judicious application of remedies to no purpose, till disease destroys, aye, kills the body. Be careful, then, young gentlemen, I repeat it, be careful, lest by a criminal evasion of truth, under the plea of expediency, you become instrumental in the destruction of the soul. By ignorance you may kill the body—by a lie, the soul.







